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ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study of small group reading instruction was conducted to learn how teachers' judgments of students' abilities influenced the way they grouped students for reading instruction and the effects of these grouping practices on teachers' planning and instructional behaviors. Two teachers and 20 students were observed over the course of a six-month period in a team-taught fifth/sixth grade classroom at a university affiliated elementary school. The results indicated that teachers group students on the basis of their reading ability. Once grouped, the group and not the individual child became the unit for many teaching decisions. Teachers' plans for the low-ability group differed considerably from their plans for the high-ability group. Procedures, decoding and basic comprehension skills, and highly structured assignments were prescribed for the low-ability group, while flexibility in procedures and assignments and an emphasis on sophisticated comprehension skills were stressed for the high-ability group. (RL)

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The Relationship Between Teachers' Grouping Decisions and Instructional Behaviors: An Ethnographic Study of Reading Instruction*

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relation among reading teachers' judgments, decisions and instructional behaviors. More specifically, this study examines how teachers' judgments of students' abilities influence their grouping decisions for reading instruction and how, in turn, these grouping decisions determine certain instructional behaviors. These purposes are realized by presenting the results of an ethnographic study conducted by the authors at a university-affiliated elementary school.

The need for research on teaching to examine the link between intentions and behaviors has been justified on several grounds. One justification is that a solely behavioral model is conceptually incomplete. It cannot account for predictable variations in teachers' behavior arising from differences in their goals, judgments, and decisions. A second justification is that research linking teachers' intentions to their behavior will provide a sound basis for educating teachers and implementing educational innovations. That is, this research models segments of the broader experience of teachers and so clarifies prototypes for important teaching activities.

Only recently have researchers begun to study teachers' judgments and decision making. Laboratory simulations by Borko (1978), Cone (1978), Cooper, Burger and Seymour (1979), Giesbrecht and Routh (2979), Russo (1978) and Shavelson et al. (1977) have found that, in judging student ability, teachers primarily use information about student achievement but also may use information about problematic behavior. Teachers' judgments about students, and not the original information about the students, appears to be the basis for their

decision making (Borko, 1978; Cone, 1978; Russo, 1978; Shavelson et al., 1977).

Furthermore, laboratory studies and survey research indicate that, when students are grouped (Barr, 1974; 1975; Russo, 1978; Shavelson & Borko, 1979) or treated as a whole class (Prawat, 1980) for instruction, teachers tend to think about the group and not the individual student. And they make instructional decisions--especially planning decisions--on the basis of the group or whole class.

For several reasons, ethnographic research on teachers' judgments, decisions, and behaviors is needed. First, previous research has relied too heavily on contrived experimental situations, verbal reports and spot checks of instructors' behaviors. Because of these choices of techniques, gigantic inferential leaps are needed to generalize findings from these studies to the thoughts and behaviors of the teacher in the classroom. Second, the methods of ethnographies are quite consistent with a major premise of research on teachers' decision making, viz. in order to understand teaching, teachers' goals, judgments and decisions must be understood, especially in relation to teachers' behavior and the classroom context.

Essentially ethnography is a narrative study (usually more descriptive than theoretical) of a bounded system in its <u>cultural</u> context. The more psychologically and cognitively oriented ethnographers assume that "individuals have meaning structures that determine much of their behavior . . . and that they seek to discover what these meaning structure are, how they develop, and how they influence behavior, in as comprehensive and objective a fashion as possible" (Wilson, 1977, p. 254). Qualitative research, then, "is predicated upon the assumption that an 'inner understanding'

enables the comprehension of human behavior in greater depth than is possible from the study of surface behavior, from paper and pencil tests and from standarized interviews" (Rist, 1979, p. 20).

Using ethnographic techniques the present study examined the process of grouping students for reading instruction and the effects of grouping on long-term instructional decisions. If there is commonality in the findings between this ethnography and the previous experimental and survey studies, the probability that the findings reflect characteristics of teachers' decisions and not artifacts of particular methodological approaches increases.

METHOD

Setting and Subjects

The study was conducted over a six-month period at a university-affiliated elementary school. In addition to providing students with a quality education, the goal of this laboratory school is to conduct research and disseminate the information to improve education. The school conducts workshops and seminars nationally and internationally. The school also provides a laboratory for UCLA research projects, primarily in the fields of psychology and education. Further, UCLA student teachers are trained here.

The general philosophy of the school is to provide a broad general education to child of varied abilities so that deaf children, those with cerebral palsy, younsters with prosthetics, learning-disabled children, retarded students as well as students with average and superior intelligence will develop cognitive and social skills. In addition, the principal advocates teaching children to be independent and to make decisions. For example, if a student finishes an assignment early, she/he is encouraged to decide whether she/he should go on to the next assignment, read a library book or

complete an assignment in another content area.

The school is comprised of 400 students of mixed ethnic backgrounds, varied socio-economic levels, and different cognitive abilities. Ten percent of the children have special problems--physical, emotional or developmental.

There is a much more rigorous selection procedure for hiring new teachers here than for hiring teachers in the Los Angeles city public schools. In addition, the experiences of the teachers are much different than those of the average Los Angeles city school teacher. Many of the teachers are consultants to school districts and/or are leaders of national workshops on teacher education. They also train UCLA student teachers and local and national administrators and teachers. At the same time they are receiving training to update and improve their skills. A small percentage of the teaching population is pursuing doctorates in education at prominent Los Angeles universities. The principal confirms the high quality of her staff and explains why:

> "The quality of teachers at a laboratory school must be second to none. Only by teachers who are supreme performing artists in classroom implementation of curriculum theory and learning theory can the critical confounding variable of the teacher be held constant. Of all the variables in classroom learning, probably the most critical is the teacher's ability to promote that learning; hence this factor must be controlled if learning gains are to be attributed to an educational treatment rather than the charisma or expertise of the professional in charge" (Hunter, 1970, p. 18).

Each classroom has a four-year age range and has two to five teachers. Placement of younsters into a class is based on social and emotional needs, not academic requirements. Reading, language arts, mathematics and social studies are taught by a regular or

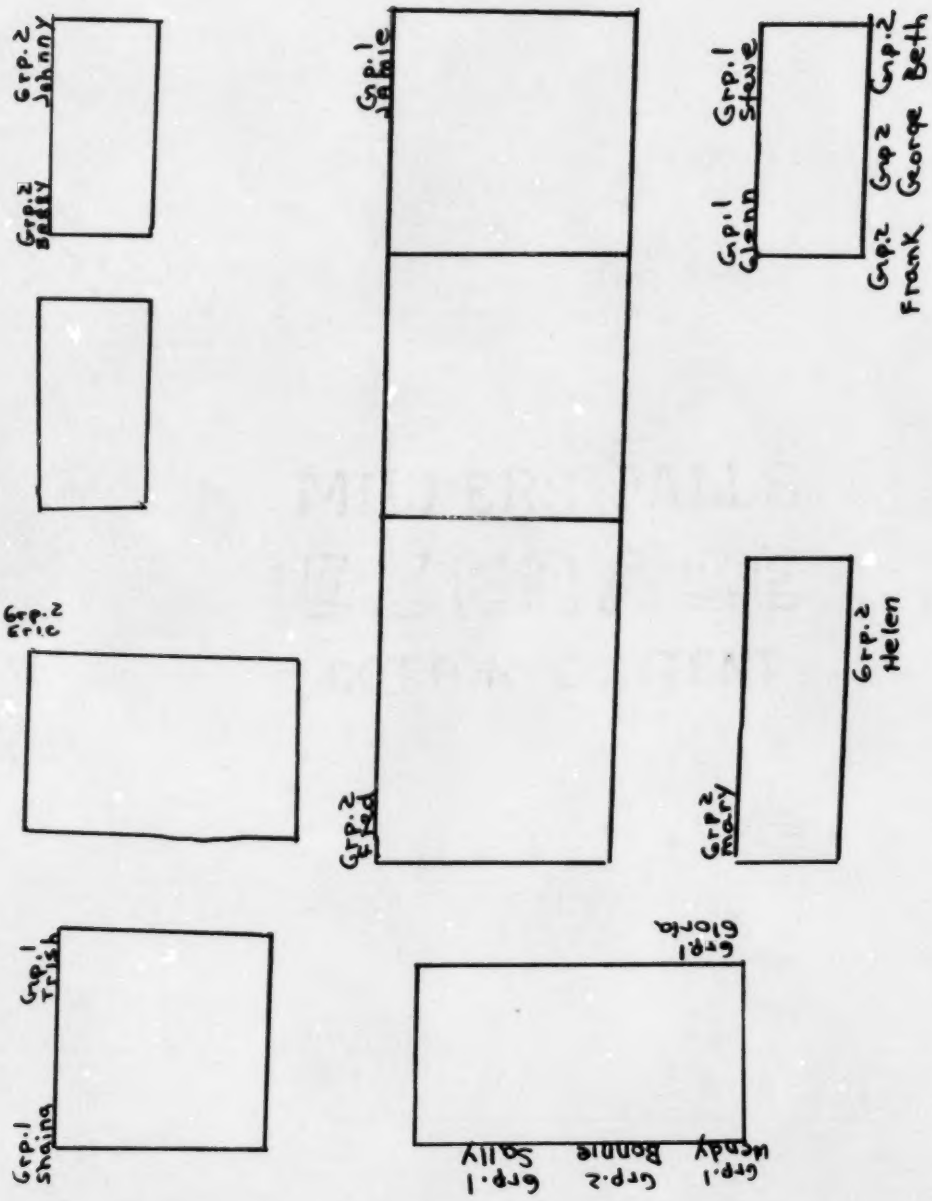
student teacher in the classroom. Children receive training in art, music, dance, drama and physical education from a specially-trained teacher outside of their assigned classroom.

This study was conducted in a 5th-6th grade classroom. During the period of the study there were three teachers in charge, two student teachers and one volunteer teacher. During reading instruction two regular teachers and one student teacher taught the highest and lowest-ability reading groups. The other regular teacher, the volunteer, and the second student teacher taught the two medium-ability reading groups.

During each reading period, there were one or more outsiders observing the lesson. These outsiders were either administrators or other teachers at the school, UCLA students, student teachers or faculty, or visitors from anywhere in the country. Since the setting was one in which observation by outsiders was standard procedure, observers of small-group reading instruction did not appear to influence teachers' or students' regular behavior.

Subjects in the highest and lowest reading groups met in an area in the back of the classroom which was referred to by the teachers and students as "the mat" (see Figure 1 for a diagram of the classroom). It was a carpeted area that could accommodate the teacher, twelve students and six observers. For instruction students sat on the floor in front of a portable blackboard while the teacher either stood or sat in a chair next to the blackboard. Students in the medium-ability groups met in the front of the classroom and faced the blackboard which spanned the front wall of the room. Table where students were given seat assignments occupied the area in the middle of the classroom.

blackboard
reading instruction area
for average-ability students



teachers' work rooms

bulletin board

blackboard

"the mat"

bulletin board with job cards posted here

Figure 1. Sketch of the classroom

We observed the following early morning classroom procedures. School began at 8:30 a.m. with the flag salute. After the salute, students read their "job card", a four by six card that contained the format for their reading instruction for that day. There was a separate job card for each reading group. They were posted on a wall in the back of the classroom adjacent to "the mat". Either the high or low ability group was assigned to go immediately to "the mat" for instruction, and one medium-ability group was assigned to go to the front of the room for a group meeting. The other two groups had an assignment to complete at their seats. Instruction began around 8:40. The reading period lasted fifty minutes from 8:30 to 9:20.

We made repeated observations of reading instruction for the highest and lowest reading groups. The reason for this restriction was that we received permission from the school to observe one regular teacher and one student teacher during reading instruction, both of whom taught only these two groups. Therefore, there were twenty-two subjects in the study -- two teachers and twenty students.

The regular teacher will be called Mrs. Smith and the student teacher Miss Jones. Mrs. Smith was teaching half-time at the school. In addition to this responsibility one day a week she was a consultant from the laboratory school to other school districts, and she lectured and held workshops across the country during the summer. She also was in the second year of a UCLA doctoral program in curriculum and instruction.

Mrs. Smith, a UCLA graduate, also received her teacher training at UES. The first half of her teaching career was spent in the Los

Angeles city schools. For the past five years she had worked full-time at this laboratory school. This sixth year was her first year as a part-time teacher.

Miss Jones was finishing her last six months of student teaching. She was considered by the laboratory school personnel to be the most outstanding student teacher currently at the school. Miss Jones, a UCLA graduate and UCLA-trained student teacher, taught full-time.

There were ten students in the highest ability reading group, four boys and six girls. Mrs. Smith described them as intellectually gifted children.

> "The first group I am going to talk about is Group 1. The children here are the top group in the team. They have read a number of books--usually 6th, 7th and and 8th grade level in terms of publishers . . . They are all exceptional children."

Some of her comments about individual children in Group 1 confirmed her statement that these students were of superior intelligence.

> "Jane's the kind of person that you tell her something once or teach her once for about five minutes and she's got it for life. Her horse power in terms of learning is just huge. She's a very bright lady."

> "Bill decodes at any level. He reads anything. He reads as well as I can, comprehends anything. Just a highly gifted person intellectually. His written skills are impeccable. Rarely an error in anything."

> "Sally can read anything. She can comprehend anything. She's extremely able ... She's a highly gifted youngster as are all the children in this group."

> "Larry is absolutely brilliant...He'll probably go to Harvard [prep school] and be straight A. Not only is he highly, highly gifted, his social skills are phenomenal.

The lowest ability group consisted of ten students, six boys and four girls. The lowest ability group contained three exceptional children--one child who was completely deaf, another

student who was learning disabled and a third who was emotionally disturbed. Mrs. Smith described them as a group of below average achievers in reading:

> "What we have here is a group decoding at a fifth grade level. Comprehension skills are lower and in need of improvement. Easy comprehension they can get. High level inference is difficult... This group is the least able group in the school."

Her comments about individual children in Group 2 coincide with her judgment about the ability level of the whole group.

> "Mary decodes on about a 4th-5th level. Comprehension is not very good...Written skills are not that good. Spelling is extremely phonetic on words that aren't phonetic so there are many errors there."

> "Fred decodes at about a 5th grade level. His comprehension is very literal, very recall..It's just like pulling teeth to get him to comprehend some of these things...He has gross motor difficulties."

> "Helen decodes at 4th-5th level. Comprehension very mediocre. Written skills, seplling---has difficulties there. She's a real slow learner...In terms of her reading ability, she's had grave difficulties."

> "Eric's comprehension is not that good in terms of understanding above a recall level but he's like a record player on a recall level. You can give him a set of directions and he can parrot it right back but there's really no understanding of what was said."

Procedure

In order to describe teachers' judgments, decisions and instructional behaviors in the classroom, data collection needed to be as unobtrusive as possible so that teachers would not deviate from their regular instructional practices, and students would not depart from their daily routines. Hence, we never participated in the setting other than observing small-group reading instruction and, on occasion, speaking to a teacher before or after school.

We watched small group reading instruction for high and low-ability students forty-five minutes a day an average of two days a week over a six-month period. An equal number of observations were collected for each day of the week except one day each week when the class went to the school library. We did not observe this activity. Further, we arrived approximately ten minutes prior to the beginning of school to watch teachers' final planning for the day.

We did not begin the study with any preconceived plan of observation. Initially, no research hypotheses had been formulated. Our only intent was to observe small-group reading instruction in the context of the natural classroom setting. For the first two months we learned about the setting and observed reading instruction and general classroom management strategies. Gradually, we became interested in the observed differences between the highest and lowest reading groups in teachers' instructional behaviors.

At this point, we began to formulate and test hypotheses about the reasons for the differences in instructional strategies. Simultaneously we kept verbatim written reports of the interaction among teachers and students during instruction. Further, permission was granted by the principal to talk to two teachers in charge of the highest and lowest reading groups about the process by which they reached instructional decisions.

Data Analysis

There were four sources of data. The first source was our written observations of the teachers' and students' interactions just prior to and during reading instruction. Written observations of the teachers' and students' behavior just before instruction took the form of scribbled notes which were transcribed into detailed

accounts immediately following reading instruction. During the first two months of the study we also took short notes about the nature of the reading instruction. These notes were written out at the end of our observation period in greater detail. In the last four months the written record of reading time consisted of verbatim accounts of what transpired.

The second source of data was the information gained from structured and unstructured interviews with the teachers. Half of the interviews were totally structured. Both teachers responded to the same questions. The teachers had no opportunity to volunteer information beyond that asked for by us. The purpose of this data collection strategy was to allow comparisons across teachers. The remainder of the interviews were unstructured discussions among us and the teacher(s). There was no specific material to cover, and the conversations were guided primarily by the teachers' thoughts at the time.

The third source of data was a tape-recorded description by Mrs. Smith of each of her students. We asked her to describe each student in any way she considered appropriate. These were her only instructions. On the tape recording she pinpointed each child on the following variables: 1) age, 2) length of time she'd taught the particular child, 3) decoding level, 4) comprehension level, 5) written skills which included composition, spelling ability and legibility of writing, 6) study habits, 7) group skills, 8) ability to check out a library book each child could and would read, and 9) other personal observations.

Decoding was defined by Mrs. Smith as "the straight decoding level as assumed by the publishers--for example, if a child is reading in a sixth grade book and missing 2 or 3 words per page

I'm going to say he or she is on a 6th grade level". Comprehension was conceptualized "pretty much a la Bloom's taxonomy". Written skills included composition skills ("how well students could write a paragraph with a good topic sentence and supporting sentences and three or four paragraphs that all relate to the same topic"), spelling skills, legibility of writing and general neatness of students' papers. Study habits were "how responsible the students were about getting things done as well as the students' use of time". Mrs. Smith talked about group skills as the student's ability "to participate in a group and to wait for others if others are talking".

The last data source was work samples produced by the students (classroom work) and by the teachers (job cards, student assignments) over the six-month period. The remainder of this section on data sources describes these work samples.

Classroom work for the lowest group consisted of responses to five teacher-prepared questions about a story from their basal reader. There were also five vocabulary words from the basal reader which the lowest-ability children had to define and put into a sentence. Two points were given for each correct response along with teacher comments. Classroom work for the highest group took a variety of forms. There were book reports with no particular format to questions from a junior high science book which required a one paragraph response to each teacher-made question. Assignments for this group were not graded--there were only teacher comments.

Job cards contained the procedures for daily reading instruction (see Figure 2 for a sample job card). There were four new job cards posted every morning, one for each reading group.

Reading--Johnny's Group (Grp. 2)

You will be called to group at 9 o'clock. Get your folder and a worksheet. Follow the directions on the worksheet.*

You need to finish the 5 questions before coming to group!!!

*worksheets are in the blue folder labelled Johnny's group

Figure 2. Sample Job Card (1/23/79)

Low ability students received a written assignment every day. Teachers handed out these written assignments toward the end of the reading period. Although the high ability students were given assignments, they rarely received written assignment sheets. For example, for the month of January they only received assignment sheets twice, on the 17th and 30th. Either they structured their own assignment (January 4, 10, 18, 23, 25), or they wrote the assignment down as the teacher described it during reading instruction (January 5, 11, 16, 19, 20).

RESULTS

Prior to Grouping for Reading Instruction Teachers Had Access to Many Sources of Information About Their Students

To determine the amount and kind of information to which teachers had access we noted (during unstructured interviews and observation of teachers' planning with one another) the student data sources to which teachers referred. In addition we observed reading instruction prior to grouping. The following sources were noted: a) anecdotal reports from other teachers, b) school reports, c) students' classroom assignments, d) students' verbal reports of their own reading abilities, and e) teachers' observations.

At faculty meetings prior to the opening of the school year, during workshops and during the school day, teachers could speak to their students' former teachers. The school also kept detailed written reports by past teachers and specialists about each student's physical and mental abilities.

During the first week of instruction every student had several reading and writing assignments. The instructors also asked their students to help determine their own reading group by selecting

a reader that contained two or three words per page that were beyond their reading level. If, as they read this book aloud to another student, they missed less than four words per page, they submitted the name of this book for consideration as their reader. Teachers confirmed each student's selection of a reader by listening to them read. Hence, analysis of our data revealed that teachers had access to many sources of information prior to forming judgments about their students.

Teachers Seek Out a Variety of Information About Their Students' Abilities

Prior to reaching judgments about their students' abilities teachers inquires about their past performance from previous teachers (observed September 17, 18, 19). They also made sure they were familar with the school files on their students.

During the first week of instruction the teachers graded every assignment. Teachers listened to every student read from the books the students chose as readers.

In addition, Mrs. Smith's tape recording indicated that she sought out a variety of information about her students. Mrs. Smith rated her students on nine characteristics: decoding, comprehension, composition, spelling, legibility of writing, responsibility, use of time, group skills, and proper use of the library. She also systematically mentioned four other characteristics: rapport with teachers, rapport with other students, social development and home environment. When asked (structured interview, January 5, 1979) if she sought out this information prior to grouping students for reading instruction, she responded affirmatively. Miss Jones (structured interview,

January 25, 1980) said she also sought out the same information.

Prior to Grouping, Teachers Integrate Information About Their Students to Form a Judgment of Each Student's Reading Ability

The two teachers did not use all of the available information about their students when forming reading groups. Rather, they integrated the information to form an estimate of each student's reading ability.

Mrs. Smith rank-ordered each student on each of the nine characteristics, mentioned in her tape-recording, that she used for grouping students. The nine variables she considered in making grouping decisions were so highly correlated (averaging .80) that knowing a student's rank on one variable would allow reasonable prediction of his or her ranking on the other variables. The teacher may have formed an underlying ability attribute for each student.

In practice, we observed that Mrs. Smith and Miss Jones relied exclusively on information about reading achievement and excluded sex, problematic behavior or achievement in other content areas. They combined all the information about students' reading ability, particularly information from observations of students' decoding level and the students' placement of themselves into a basal reader, their written assignments the first week of school and anecdotal reports from previous teachers to form a global estimate of the students' ability as high or low (observations of September 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 27, 1979). They then used these global estimates to form high and low reading groups (observations and structured interviews with both teachers on October 2, 1979).

The Group Becomes the Input for Other Instructional Decisions

To determine the impact of grouping decisions on subsequent instructional behaviors, we observed reading instruction, interviewed the teachers, and analyzed teacher and student work samples (teacher-prepared job cards and assignment sheets, students' classwork). Table 1 summarizes the major differences between the highest and lowest reading groups gathered from these different sources over the period of the study.

Once the group was formed, teachers used characteristics of the group to make decisions regarding the format for instruction. First, the low ability group met with their teacher every day, except library days, for an average of twenty minutes of small-group instruction. In contrast, the high ability students did not meet with their teachers every day, and the average amount of teacher time per lesson was less. Since these students were given two and three-day assignments, there was not the need to meet every day. On certain occasions (January 4, 18, 23, 25, 1980), the students were given the choice of deciding when to meet. Ad hoc meetings of short duration (January 5, 10, 11, 16, 19, 24, 25, 30, 31; February 1; Marcy 23, 27, 1980) occurred mostly when an assignment was carried over from one day to the next, so that the teacher responsible for the group could check on the progress the students were making toward completion of the assignment.

Reading Lessons for Low Group

Students in the low ability group received much more highly structured lessons and class assignments than the high ability group. The daily lesson for the low ability group usually began with a motivational exercise called an anticipatory set (Hunter &

Table 1. Differences in Instructional Strategies Between the Highest and Lowest Reading Groups for Thirty-Four Lessons.

		High Group	Low Group
1.	Average Lesson	15 minutes	20 minutes
2.	Class Meetings	As needed	Daily
3.	Standarized Structure for Lessons	Rarely	Always
4.	Reference to Teacher-Determined Standards for Assignments	10 lessons	25 lessons
5.	Reference to Student-Determined Standards for Assignments	3 lessons	0 lessons
6.	Decoding During Instruction	15 lessons	28 lessons
7.	Motivational Exercises	5 lessons	34 lessons
8.	Standarized Format for Follow-up Assignments	None	Daily
9.	Variety in Sources for Reading Materials	Yes	No
10.	Classwork Continued From from One Day to the Next	15 times	0
11.	Teacher Talk Time During Lessons	1/4 of the time	1/2 to 3/4 of the time

Russell, 1976). The purposes of this activity were to focus the group's attention on the upcoming instruction and to develop a readiness for instruction. Following the anticipatory set, the instructor told the students the format for the lesson.

The teacher began oral reading from the basal reader and then chose three to five children to read aloud. The teacher asked the students to respond to approximately nine comprehension questions about the material they just read. When a student gave a correct response the teacher tended to repeat it, pointing out to the students the format of a proper response. The follow-up assignment, which was to be finished by the end of the reading period, was then distributed to the students, and the teacher presented or reminded the students of the proper format for answers to this assignment. The group completed a question together and, prior to dismissal, the teacher asked several students to repeat the proper response format. The teacher talked from one-half to three-quarters of the lesson.

The follow-up assignments were also highly structured, and this structure was retained over the entire semester. Assignments contained five questions and five vocabulary words. Students were required to answer each question, define the words as they were defined in the glossary of their book, and write a sentence for each word. The assignments were to be finished in approximately twenty-five minutes, the amount of time remaining in the daily reading period after group instruction. Students were told by their teacher how to allocate their time to complete the assignment. Assignments were never continued from one day to the next. A lesson and follow-up assignment following the format described above for low-ability students is presented in Appendix A.

The low-ability reading group had less variety in their exposure to written materials than the high-ability group. The students in the low group used the same Ginn basal reading series over the entire semester. They only changed to a faster-paced reader in the series.

Reading Lessons for High Group

The teacher did not provide as much structure in the lessons for the high ability students. Lessons rarely began with a motivational exercise, and students did not read aloud as often. Teacher standards for a correct response were not emphasized in this group as much as divergent approaches to a problem. The teacher talked for approximately one-quarter of the time.

The lessons took a variety of forms. There were short lessons to check for pupil progress on an assignment extended over a few days. There were longer lessons where a new topic from a basal reader, a popular magazine or a content area textbook was discussed, and then the students were asked an average of nine comprehension questions to check for their understanding of the material. There were brainstorming sessions where the focus was on student input to solve a problem such as how to present an interesting book report to the group. There were sessions where the students presented their work to the group.

Classroom assignments were less structured for the high ability group, and when structure was provided it varied from lesson to lesson. Some assignments were very structured, and answers required specific knowledge. Other classwork demanded the students provide their own structure and the information appropriate for that structure. A lesson and classroom assignment following the format described above for the high ability

reading students is presented in Appendix B.

High ability students were exposed to an assortment of reading materials. Occassionally, they read from a basal reader. Further, they spent a number of weeks reviewing junior-high level books in different content areas such as science and social studies. They also read articles from magazines for young adults.

Concluding Comments

This study examined two teachers' policies about grouping students for reading and traced the grouping decision through interactive teaching. The results indicate that teachers grouped students for reading on the basis of ability. Once grouped, the group and not the individual student became the unit for planning instruction. Teachers' plans for the low group differed considerably from their plans for the high group. Procedures, decoding and basic comprehension skills and highly structured assignments were prescribed for the low group while flexibility in procedures and assignments and an emphasis on sophisticated comprehension skills were stressed for the high group.

The focus of this study has been on the decision-making process of two teachers who differ from most city school teachers in several ways. First, they have different experiences at a laboratory school than teachers in the public schools (e.g., more training, opportunities to consult). Second, these two are perceived by others as exceptional teachers. This does not mean that, because of a restricted sample, our results have little significance for the field. Rather, since our findings replicate the results of laboratory (Borko, 1978; Russo, 1978) and survey (Barr, 1974, 1975) studies, our study indicates that

the results of previous experiments, using teachers of varied background, can be generalized even to planning and some teaching behaviors of superior teachers in exceptional settings.

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8:49 Miss Jones writes the following message on the blackboard.

Without looking be ready to tell the 5 elements of S.O.E.* for a Good Answer

8:55 Miss Jones asks each student in Group 2 to go to "the mat".

Miss Jones: Attention group. You did a nice job of following directions on the job card. For 20 minutes most of you read the whole time. On the whole, a good job. What is the first element of S.O.E.?

Mary: Includes question in the answer.

Mi

Miss Jones: Good answer. The first element of S.O.E. is it has the question in the answer. What else?

Fred: Has key details.

Miss Jones: That's right. The second partoof a complete answer is is that it has key details to support the answer. What is another S.O.E. for a good answer?

Helen: Has lots of supporting details and no unnecessary information.

Miss Jones: Very good. You have mentioned two more elements of S.O.E.--lots of supporting details and no unnecessary information. The last S.O.E. for a good answer is what? Bonnie.

Bonnie: No spelling errors.

Miss Jones: That's right--no spelling errors. You did a nice job. Today we are going to read The Birds That Saved The Harvest, and then we will answer some questions. Remember the 5 S.O.E. for a good answer when you respond to the questions. George, begin reading.

George read 3 paragraphs with no corrections for errors by the teacher.

Miss Jones: How did the gulls save the lives of the first settlers of the Great Salt Lake Valley? Who can give me a good answer--thinking about the 5 S.O.E.?

Johnny: The gulls saved the lives of the first settlers of the Great Salt Lake Valley by killing the crickets that were eating their crops.

Miss Jones: What did Johnny include in his answer?

Barry:8 He included all 5 S.O.E.

Miss Jones: Did he include key details of the question?

Frank: Yeah

*S.O.E. are Standards of Excellence.

Miss Jones: Frank read next.

Frank reads a paragraph. The teacher corrects him twice for decoding errors.

Miss Jones: What are gulls, George?

George: Birds that fly from Mineral Island and eat crickets.

Miss Jones: What has George included in his answer? (no response) It has important details to support the answer. Does it leave out unnecessary information. Thumbs up if it does; thumbs down if it doesn't. Everyone is showing me thumbs down. Barry, please read.

Barry reads two paragraphs. The teacher corrects him for one decoding error and complements him on his good job of reading.

Miss Jones: What do gulls look like?

Mary: Gulls have narrow wings.

Miss Jones: What else?

Helen: Their backs are soft gray.

Miss Jones: Anything else.

Barry: They have black marking on the tip of each wing.

Miss Jones: Yes. Gulls have narrow wings and webbed feet. Their backs are soft gray and they have black markings on the tip of each wing.
Miss Jones distributes the follow-up assignment. Below is the contents of this assignment.

A. Read the story, "The Birds That Saved the Harvest", pp. 346-355.
B. Answer these questions in complete sentences.
   1. Where is Rock Island?
   2. Where and when will you find baby gulls?
   3. Why would the parent gulls need to bring food to their babies?
   4. How do the gulls react to visitors?
   5. What do gulls eat?

Vocabulary--define and put into a sentence.

1. settlers
2. crickets
3. monument
4. glassy
5. gliding

Miss Jones: The type of answers you have given today in class are the kind I expect. We only have a few minutes left. You will have tomorrow til nine o'clock to finish

this assignment. Then you will come to group and evaluate your answers. Helen, what is your job today?

Helen: Finish the five questions and five vocabulary words.

Miss Jones: When are the questions due?

Fred: Tomorrow at nine o'clock.

Miss Jones: What are we doing tomorrow at nine o'clock?

George: Talking about the questions.

Miss Jones: After you have finished the first question bring it to me to evaluate. What do you do after you've finished the first question?

Bonnie: Bring it to you to evaluate.

Miss Jones: Good. You're excused.

Lesson ended at 9:12.
Lesson Time: 20 minutes.

Miss Jones has the following written on the blackboard: Take a handout from on the chair. Begin reading silently.

Miss Jones: Attention group. Today we start the science content area. The handout was easy reading. Did you find it easy, what you've read of it?

Shaina: Yes.

Miss Jones: You'll have your oral reports tomorrow. You have decided on the format already. There will be a short test Friday covering this handout. There will be no trick questions. If you read the selection, do the work, you'll have no problem on the test. (Miss Jones hands out a selection entitled "How to Study in Your Science Textbook".) This first selection is out of your textbook. (Miss Jones hands out a second selection entitled, "How to Read a Classification Selection"). Next week you will read about 30 pages in your science textbook, and you will have a test. Next week's selection is not so clearcut, so this second handout will help you. Let's look at it. What is overviewing?

Peter: Looking at headlines, main ideas, pictures.

Miss Jones: I know you can read and understand this article. When will you be test?

Trish: Friday.

Miss Jones: Okay. You're excused.

Lesson Time: 5 minutes